

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "NO ALTERNATIVE," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XVIII. A GHOST ARISES.

"We must stay and see these two poor girls through this," Captain Bellairs says to Frank Forest, one evening, as they are sauntering towards Watersmeet. The funerals are over, the dead are resting quietly in Lynton churchyard, and thoughts of the living are predominating again.

A doctor and Mrs. Angerstein, the brother and sister-in-law of the deceased, have swooped down upon the widow, and at first to all appearances their breasts were surcharged with kindly sentiments. But a day or two and a discovery have altered this. They have come down prepared to greet and treat her as a well dowered widow deserves to be greeted and treated in the family. But the family cannot find any will dated after the late Mr. Angerstein's marriage, and the one which they do find, and which is dated anterior to that event (which came about suddenly and secretly be it remembered) leaves everything—even the pretty villa at Barnes—to his brother and his brother's children. The poor, broken-down woman, who was rapidly getting tired—not of her husband, but of the ties that bound her to him—while he lived, is plunged now into one of those abysses of remorse, out of which cries will make themselves heard. "To lose him, and to be left poor, it's a judgment on me for looking at Harry again," she weeps out to Kate.

"The right will is sure to come to hand in time," Kate says, with the hopefulness that is apt to be the portion of the person who is not most profoundly interested in

the case, "and if it does not, your brother-in-law will give you your own, surely."

"My brother-in-law's wife would never relinquish one penny that came into her clutches," Mrs. Angerstein replies. "No Kate, if there is no other will, my poor babies and I shall be turned out to shift for ourselves; and what can I do?" the poor woman asks, a deadly conviction of her own incapacity overtaking her, as she pictures those children—in want.

"And what can I do?" Kate responds mournfully; for Kate, in losing her father, loses the little income his half-pay and pension made. She has faced the fact of the future penury, of the life of hard labour for herself, steadily enough, but now, when it seems to be becoming a certainty that Mrs. Angerstein's case is as bad, if not worse, inasmuch as the latter has children to support, Kate's heart goes very low under her poignant sense of her own inability to help.

"If I had ever so small a certainty, they should have that, and I could work for myself," she thinks, "but as it is, if I propose to her to link our wretched fortunes together, I may be an incubrance rather than a stay to her."

It is under the influence of this state of feeling, of desire to help, and doubt and distrust of her own powers of helping, that she speaks to her cousin Frank.

"I have brains to help myself," she says confidently, "but I feel bound to help these poor dears too, with whom my lot has been cast so strangely, lately. I am afraid there is no will later than this one which leaves everything to his brother."

"It's a most unfortunate acquaintance altogether," Frank answers, with a restless desire to remove the burden from Kate's shoulders, if possible, but certainly

not to share it with her; "my advice to you is, to cut the concern, you can do her no good, you know, dear; go back to Dunster and wind up, and then go to my mother for a time—till—till we can settle things."

"She would die of dismay if I left her," Kate says; "I'm not going to have that on my conscience; while she needs help she'll have it from me, Frank, if I can give it to her."

"When they make Quixotic resolutions, women generally cause waves of sorrow to roll over their own heads," Frank replies, caustically, for again at this juncture he proposes uniting his fate and fortune with his cousin's, when he "can see his way;" but he does not feel at all disposed to unite either with Mrs. Angerstein and her helpless offspring. It may be added that neither does he, at present, "see his way." For May, though she is observing a stern silence, has not given him an official order of release yet.

It is after this little parley with Kate relative to her "Quixotic determination," that Frank is sauntering up to Watersmeet with a cigar in his mouth, and Captain Bellairs by his side. "We must stay and see these two poor girls through this," the latter has just observed, although, as yet, he has not the least idea of the way in which either Frank or himself can be useful.

"I think the less we have to do with that woman the better," Frank says, sententiously; "not but what she's a very nice little woman as far as she goes, but Kate owed it to herself and to me to have been more careful. Naturally, you, as her father's friend, feel inclined to stick up for the poor little widow; you're right enough, and I should do the same thing in your place; but Kate may damage herself, don't you know."

Bellairs puffs away in silence. He has confided Cissy's secret, though not Cissy's name and present position, to the worldly, selfish sister of this worldly, selfish, impulsive, and still to a certain degree calculating man. As he remembers this, and reflects that this may be the means of depriving poor Cissy of her truest, staunchest woman-friend, he feels as if he had better have cut his tongue out than have spoken as he has spoken. But remorse is a vain thing. He knows that he is called upon to say something.

"Your cousin will not be damaged, Forest; let her alone, she'll always do the

right thing; if I had sisters of my own I should take my poor old friend's daughter to them now; as it is, for heaven's sake let your cousin obey her instincts, and go on playing the sweet merciful part she is playing."

There is angry silence between the two men after this. Each is disgusted with the other. Bellairs with Frank for his selfishness, Frank with Bellairs for his want of it. All the time Frank is writhing under the consciousness that he has not had it out yet with Kate about that idle tale which has been told against her by May. That it is an idle tale he is well convinced, but still the memory of it lingers, and has poisoned these last few days of almost unfettered intercourse with his cousin.

"You don't think that Miss Mervyn is the sort of girl who'd ever be rash or imprudent at all, do you?" he asks, turning to his friend, "I know her and understand her well, but I was wondering how her manner strikes a fellow who doesn't know her well."

Bellairs remembers the hot-headed, high-spirited girl of the old Torquay days, who rode so rashly at his bidding, and risked so much for his love. Remembering her thus—liking her better than ever now—burning with jealousy at her cousin's tone concerning her, he feels the blood mounting in a most compromising way to his brow.

"A fellow must be a cad who could misunderstand her," he says, distinctly, but the reassuring words do not reassure Frank, for he has seen that flush which betokens a consciousness of something unknown to him, spread over Captain Bellairs's face, and a vague suspicion haunts him, which he is half afraid to set at rest.

"She's rather headstrong, a habit that has grown out of that power she gained of twisting her poor father round her fingers," he says, presently, "but I believe if she loved a fellow, he might lead her by a silk thread; but women dislike her, and are always making insinuations against her."

"I don't think I should care—" Captain Bellairs begins, and then he stops.

"Yes?" Frank interrogates.

"Well, I don't think I should care to see much more of a woman who made insinuations against her," Bellairs says, thinking that he was making a safe remark, inasmuch as he supposed the insinuations had been made by one of Frank's sisters.

"To tell the truth I don't care very much to see any more of the woman who made them," Frank says, gloomily, as he recalls a vision of his irate and injured May; "but that's outside the question altogether." Then he reflects that he cannot discuss this vexed question which May has raised about his cousin with Bellairs, and comes to an awkward halt.

But later in the evening, when Bellairs has gone back to his hotel, and the badly assorted Angersteins are striving to keep up the hollow appearance of being at peace with and well disposed towards one another, Frank resolves to broach the subject to his harassed, unsettled cousin.

"Come out by the river, dear," he says, regardless of Mrs. Angerstein's little start of fright, and her look of appeal that she may not be left alone to the tender mercies of her terrible "own people;" and Kate, feeling only that she "may as well oblige him for the short time they are together," wraps a scarf about herself, and goes with him down to the banks of the boulder-interrupted Lyn.

They stand there for a few minutes looking at the shattered moonbeams sparkling like diamonds in the restive stream, and speculate as to whether the trout will bite to-morrow, and whether it will not be just as well for them all to go up and spend the day in the heart of the Doon Valley, as to spend it in Lynmouth, where all their emotions are visible to the eyes of the whole village, by reason of the stuffiness of the hot little lodgings which obliges them to live nearly at the open window. When they have settled this point in favour of the Doon Valley, Frank says that which he came out to say.

"I suppose you have not troubled yourself very much about my motive in coming down again so soon, have you, Kate?"

"I put it down to kind-heartedness; you knew my poor friend was in trouble about the death of her husband, and you thought that I should be in trouble on account of my friend; I never looked for any other motive, Frank," she says, giving him a glance that is intended to tell him that she neither expects nor wishes him to make love to her again.

"I had another motive, though," Frank says, brusquely enough, for he dislikes his self-imposed task very much indeed, now that he has fairly entered upon it.

"You had?" she asks, lifting her eyebrows, and with her eyes still bent on the river, she lifts her head a trifle higher, and

prepares to listen to him, with a look of almost angry attention on her face.

"It's an awkward topic to broach to you, dear," he goes on, feeling every moment more embarrassed and uncomfortable, "but the long and the short of it is, Kate, that some confounded gabbling fool has concocted a story in which your name is mixed up, and has been giving it out rather too publicly to be pleasant to—those who love you."

"Yes?" she questions, as he comes to a full stop.

"Is that all you're going to say? Won't you ask me what the story is?"

"No," she says, with almost fierce decision.

"But Kate," he protests, more humbly than he began, "it's a story that concerns your honour, and that ought to be refuted."

She looks at him with an intense questioning look in her eyes, but she does not speak. While he, though all his pulses are beating in response to that look, determines not to be subdued by it.

"Shall I tell you who told the story in a ball-room to a—girl I know—" he is beginning, when she interrupts him.

"Say 'to Miss Constable' at once; yes, go on."

"It was a cousin of Clement Graham's."

She is moved now, in spite of all her efforts at self-control. The hand that is clasping the scarf trembles. The questioning eyes are veiled for a moment by the suddenly downcast lids. When they are lifted again, the eyes are dimmed with tears, and all the nervous sensitive face is quivering.

"A cousin of Clement Graham's, was it?" she asks, with a little sob in her voice; "Clement Graham might as well have let it rest."

He stands back from her as she says this, in utter dismay, almost in despair. Each instant he has been expecting to hear an indignant denial of the lie ring from her lips, and now she is almost confessing that it is a truth.

"Then Clement Graham does know something that you would rather he didn't know?" he asks, smothering, as well as he can, his mortification and disappointment.

She lowers her head now before she answers. All the old feeling of bitter humiliation—all the sensations of girlish despairing fear that by means of her own rash act she had wrecked her life, sweep over her mind again, as he ruthlessly tries to disinter the story.

"Clement Graham knows all that there was to know—more than I knew at the time, Frank," she mutters; "don't ask me about it; I was a fool, oh! such a loving, trusting fool, but nothing worse; don't be too harsh on me; it was such a brief dream, it was an error from beginning to end; don't torture me by making me resuscitate my buried, but never forgotten dead."

She inclines nearer to him as she speaks, and, strong in his outraged Philistine strength, he takes no notice of the mute appeal. Each word she utters in her ignorance of how the story he has heard may be exaggerated, condemns her the more entirely in his estimation. He believes the worst of May's statements, and also believes that May's innocence has been a shield against the telling of the even worse things there are to state. Better life with May a thousand times than Kate with the false, will-o'-the-wisp glitter about her, of having cleared herself, like an adventuress, from the dangers and disgrace she had incurred as a girl.

"We'll be good friends, and—cousins still, Kate," he says, rather brokenly, "and I'll keep things square in the family for you, and make May understand that she had better keep her knowledge to—"

"What!" she interrupts, "is it to May I owe this? Well, Frank, it's a just Nemesis no doubt—the part I have played towards her has not been the most generous in the world."

"I oughtn't to have brought her name into it," he says, sulkily, "she only repeated to me a piece of ball-room chatter, which she didn't very much credit, and I determined to clear up; however, you confirm it, so there's nothing more to be said on that subject; you never told me you had been at Torquay with your father."

"The memory of the days there was not so blessed that I should seek to recall them," she says, bitterly, and in that confession, and the tone in which it is made, he hears confirmation strong of the truth of that story which will prevent his ever making Kate Mervyn his wife. While she, watching him, reads in his face such condemnation of herself, that she dare not explain to him how free from blemish her conduct had really been.

"I'm shivering," she presently says, "and we've said all we have to say to each other—all we ever shall have to say to each other; I shall go back;" then she

hesitates for an instant before she perpetrates the worst mistake she can make.

"Don't say a word of this to Captain Bellairs," she says, piteously. "I should be sorry for him to think—" she breaks down before she can say, "I should be sorry for him to think he has spoilt my life." Frank naturally attaches quite a different meaning to her unuttered words.

#### AN INSIDE VIEW.

SHADYVILLE—that part of London wherein for various reasons I incline to pitch my tent—has lately known a new excitement. There is not, as a rule, much excitement in Shadyville. What little there is inclines to be of a noisy and unpleasant character. Three great railway stations draw towards themselves an immense number of cabs, which tear over the stones at every hour of the day and night. My own particular street is supposed to be of the quiet order, but the cabs render night hideous and day unbearable. There are, moreover, peculiar features in Shadyville. Huge ghastly squares, compared with which Finsbury Circus is an abode of sweetness and light, confer on the neighbourhood an air of grim "gentility." The ghosts of departed luminaries of the law are supposed to hover over these dreary solitudes, and vexatious gates—closed at absurdly early hours—drive cabmen to despair. Absolute, downright, thorough solitude would be endurable—if it could be found—but the solitude of Shadyville is tempered by the eccentricities of the rough population inhabiting the mysterious alleys and "slums" which have in some way sneaked in between highly respectable thoroughfares. Hard by my domicile—which I acquired during the rainy autumn days—is a narrow archway, innocent enough when it rains, but hideous in sunny June. Bright weather kindles into life my roughest neighbours, who, under the influence of the summer sun, swarm out of the archway aforesaid, and indulge in song, dance, horseplay, and other diversions peculiar to Shadyville. Only a few days ago it was my privilege to witness an actual realization of the famous "slanging" scene in "La fille de Madame Angot." A sprightly young milkmaid was giving a "bit of her mind," to a far older watercress woman. For a long while the verbal combat appeared likely to end in blows, but the watercress



vendor, by a judicious interposition of her basket between herself and the enraged milkmaid, secured the advantage of useful "cover," whence she pined her artillery of bitter sarcasm. Ultimately "milk" vanquished "watercresses" by a keen reflection on the life led by the daughter of the latter lady, who retreated in a state of disorder and gin.

There are many other drawbacks to a residence in Shadyville. Even on quiet days the types of humanity visible hereabout are not of an engaging kind. Walking home to dinner through the vast squares in a state of calm despair, induced by the feeling that my dinner is being overcooked, I meet Colonel Altamount and Papa Eccles, who, with glassy eye and luminous nose, are evidently lurking around the abode of some well-to-do relative, and I chuckle as I anticipate the effect of their arrival at the solid establishments of Shadyville. I picture to myself the look of the footman who slips a dirty card into the hand of the master of the house, and imagine the aspect of that worthy gentleman as he pushes aside his plate of asparagus, and prepares to "bleed" to the extent of a "fiver." We are high and mighty in our Shadyville squares, but within five minutes' walk are tripe and trotter shops, penny ices, and cheap photographs, curds and whey, and chimney-sweeps, who pursue their calling on scientific principles.

But for all our sham second-rate "gentility" and rough surroundings, there is good honest human work doing in Shadyville. In the dreariest part of this dull neighbourhood is a dismal house, in its outward aspect unlovely enough, but in its inward working most useful, symmetrical, and practical. This is the Central London Throat and Ear Hospital, in Manchester-street, Gray's Inn-road—pitched in that particular spot, on account of the propinquity of the King's Cross Railway Station, an arrangement which allows sufferers, in search of relief, to obtain it at the smallest possible outlay in travelling expenses. It is at once clear that relief in throat and ear cases is in strong demand. A lower room is crowded with patients awaiting their turn to be examined. The majority of them present that aspect of despairing patience which is so often seen in the out-patient, who, having travelled many weary miles, sits down to rest and wait. Punctual to the minute arrives the surgeon, who possesses a

wonderful knack of getting through his examinations rapidly, with the aid of an ingenious contrivance, called the laryngoscope. This instrument is in three parts. First, a small mirror fixed to a long slender shank, which is introduced into the back of the throat—the mouth of the patient being kept wide open, and the tongue held down during the operation. Second, an apparatus consisting of an oxyhydrogen or an Argand lamp, fitted with a lens for projecting a strong ray of light. Third, a reflector, perforated in the centre, and fixed by a spectacle frame over one of the eyes of the operator. The only physical principle involved is the well known law—affecting optics and billiards—that the angle of reflection is equal to the angle of incidence. A couple of chairs being placed opposite to each other, and the lamp standing on a table at the side of them, the inspector seats his patient upright on one of the chairs, meanwhile occupying the other chair himself. The perforated reflector is fixed over the right eye of the operator, giving him the appearance of a benevolent Cyclops. The mouth of the patient is now widely opened, and the examiner, after covering his left hand with a small towel, seizes gently, but firmly, that unruly member, the tongue, which, on this, as on all other occasions, is apt to be troublesome. With open mouth, with tongue held down, and head thrown slightly backwards, the patient is now ready for examination, but the uvula is the only important organ visible to the naked eye. To enable the operator to see the interior of the larynx or voice-box, and perform the feat of looking round the corner, the lamp and reflectors are now set to work.

A stream of light is projected from the lamp on to the reflector fixed over the eye of the observer, and is in turn thrown on the base of the uvula, a useful but ticklish little organ given to many eccentricities, among which elongation is one of the most irritating. A bright disk of light being now thrown on this spot, the observer takes the small shanked mirror in his right hand, and, after warming its reflecting surface over the lamp—to prevent the moisture of the breath from settling upon and dimming it—introduces it into the back of the throat. Considerable delicacy is necessary in performing this operation, as the back of the mirror rests on the uvula, and this organ demands nothing

better than to be irritated and thus to induce a choking sensation. The uvula being now gently pushed upwards and backwards, the face of the small mirror is turned downwards towards the epiglottis—a hard name for the trap-door which defends the throat and prevents food from “going the wrong way.” As the soft palate and uvula prevent food from going upwards into the posterior portion of the nose, so does the epiglottis or valve which stands erect at the extreme root of the tongue, protect the entrance of the throat, and thus leave a dainty mouthful no chance of being diverted from its proper channel. Persons who, during their youth, have not been admonished “not to speak with their mouth full,” sometimes attempt to speak under these conditions. This effort raises the epiglottis, or throat-lid, a particle of food gets under it, and a violent fit of coughing ensues.

Light being thrown on this ticklish region, a beautiful image of the interior of the larynx is seen. This voice-box is near the upper part of the windpipe, and produces externally the prominence known as Adam’s apple. For sound-producing purposes the lungs may be regarded as a pair of bellows worked by muscular machinery, and the trachea, or windpipe, as an elastic tube capable of being contracted at will, and, therefore, capable of modifying the current of air. This current passes through the sound-box and produces vocal notes. The larynx is a true musical instrument open at the top and bottom, but partially closed in the centre by horizontal membranes which extend across it from front to rear. Of firm but elastic construction, the vocal apparatus is protected from injury by sundry tough cartilages. Respecting the precise mechanical origin of the sounds produced in the human voice-box, many theories have been advanced; but the importance of the horizontal membranes, or “vocal cords” has never been denied. The true vocal ligaments are two in number. They grow out from the sides of the box and approach each other very nearly, leaving between their edges a narrow chink through which the air passes. This perfect musical box has been compared to many artificial instruments, some professors contending that it resembles a stringed instrument, others upholding the opinion that it is a reed instrument of the oboe or clarinet class, and others comparing it to a simple wind instrument, such as the flute.

For a long time the stringed instrument

theory held its own. The vocal cords were compared to the strings of a violin, and their vibration, when agitated by a column of air, was assigned as the cause of sound, and to their degree of tension was attributed the differences of pitch. Numerous experiments were made with pieces of leather or india-rubber, placed over pipes connected with an organ bellows, and the conclusion arrived at was that the voice was indebted, not only for its origin, but for its pitch and range, to the lengthening or shortening of the vocal ligaments. This theory underwent the fate of many other theories. A new school sprang up, and started a new series of inquiries as to the analogy between the human vocal apparatus and reed instruments. No longer regarding the sound box alone as the object of interest, these enquirers pushed their investigations farther, and came to the conclusion that the larynx is a part altogether subservient to the influences received from the pipe above and below it. It was, of course, known on all sides that the human voice required a current of air for its production, and the theory was now advanced that a modification of that current, by the contraction of the tubes through which it passed, was the prime necessity for the production of different notes. The human voice was therefore pronounced to be a wind instrument of the oboe class, receiving its peculiar reedy quality from the structure of the vocal cords.

To the advocates of the flute theory the windpipe was the most important part of the whole apparatus. At one end they saw the lungs or bellows, and at the other the musical box to be played on. Watching the action of the sound box externally, they saw that it shifted its position during the production of sounds of different pitch, ascending with high notes, and descending with deeper tones. Thus the windpipe during the ascent of the larynx became lengthened, and during its descent was shortened. This would have settled everything, but as Mr. Vandeleur Lee—in his excellent treatise on the voice—most pertinently observes, “according to acoustics, a pipe is shortened for the production of high notes, and lengthened for the utterance of those of grave or low pitch; exactly the opposite operation to that performed by the windpipe.” This was awkward, but when was a theorist crushed by a vulgar fact? This untoward action of the windpipe was put down as an

"acoustic paradox," and it was decided that if acoustics and the windpipe did not agree, so much the worse for acoustics or the windpipe. Since the flute, reed, and stringed theories were advanced, attempts were made to explain the action of the human voice-box on the bird-call principle, and to its capability of increasing or lessening the vent for the wind, was assigned the production of various tones. The windpipe was a flexible tube, wonderful in its power of self adaptation; it regulated pitch by adjusting its calibre to the velocity of the current of air, and could thus produce voice much after the manner of the wind sighing, moaning, whistling, or screeching, through the key-hole of the door. Unhappily this theory broke down when it became known that the superior vocal ligament may be destroyed "without any material change taking place in the character of the ordinary speaking voice." Mr. Vandeleur Lee himself inclines to the belief that many of the most important variations of sound are due to the action of the pharynx or upper portion of the windpipe between the voice-box and the mouth, and that on the shortening or lengthening of this portion of the vocal instrument depends the alteration of pitch.

But while I have been discoursing on the human voice apparatus, the poor folks whose voice-boxes are terribly out of order have been waiting to be examined. Standing immediately behind my friend the doctor, I enjoy the prospect of many deranged throats—many of them far gone indeed, with their delicate membranes thickened and inflamed so as to make their owners inaudible. While watching these "cases," I become aware of the immense difference in absolute accuracy between the stethoscope and the laryngoscope. The former is an admirable sounding instrument in its way, and is popular enough, as is proved by its so constantly inhabiting the hats of so many medical practitioners. Nevertheless its influence depends as much upon the operator as upon itself. The stethoscopist must not only be able to hear perfectly, but must be able to draw accurate deductions from what he hears—conditions that may lead two operators to arrive at diametrically opposite conclusions. Now, there is not much scope for difference of opinion when the throat instrument is used. So far as local disease is concerned, it is at once made apparent; the sore is

laid open to view, and is by a few strokes of a skilful pencil faithfully depicted on paper by the surgeon-artist. Moreover, when immediate remedies are necessary, they may be applied at once to the precise spot, in the exact strength required, instead of being scattered in a diluted condition over the entire surface of the whole throat.

But the use of the instrument is not confined to dealing with disorders of a strictly local character, as it may be made to assist materially the diagnosis of general condition. In throat consumption the voice-box reveals in its early stages the existence of that dread disease, and although sooner or later the chest will be attacked, I am assured that in a large number of cases, phthisis may be discovered in the throat by the eye, long before the lungs reveal it to the ear. In like manner, certain cases of heart disease may supply objective evidence to the laryngoscope—notably those in which the nerve supplying power to certain muscles of the larynx is pressed upon, and one or other side of the box paralysed.

I have already alluded to the rapidity with which the laryngoscope may be applied by a deft manipulator. One by one the patients are dismissed, much comforted, to their several homes. A ceremony—which I cannot help thinking wise and considerate—is insisted on. Each patient is asked whether he or she can pay anything for treatment, and it is left to the people themselves to assess the amount they can afford. In no case is relief refused, and to the utterly poor and needy it is given cheerfully, gratis, without insisting on governors' letters, while the independence of the patient is saved, if he be in a condition to pay anything. The right of option is, I am glad to say, appreciated by the applicant, and I can testify with pleasure to the eagerness with which the poor people come forward to pay their few shillings per month, rather than owe succour entirely to charity. Nevertheless, the incomings must fall very, very far short of the outgoings, more especially as the number of patients is already so great as to need more ample accommodation. Nearly a thousand persons have applied for advice since the hospital was opened this spring, and the medical officers have so much to do, that they have been tempted, in order to do justice to their work, to give up two evenings per week to their patients. These evening sittings are of incalculable

value to the patients, who can thus obtain help without losing a day or half-a-day's work. As an instance of an institution doing special work in the most thorough manner, the Central London Throat and Ear Hospital deserves earnest public support, inasmuch as it relieves disorders the treatment of which requires that "special" knowledge—imperatively demanded by the rich, but so difficult of attainment by the poor.

### THE MASTER OF THE REVELS.

LORDS of Misrule and Abbots of Unreason had long presided over the Yuletide festivities of old England; in addition to these functionaries King Henry the Eighth nominated a Master and Yeoman of the Revels to act as the subordinates of his Lord Chamberlain, and expressly to provide and supervise the general entertainments and pastimes of the court. These had already been ordered and established after a manner that seemed extravagant by contrast with the economical tastes of the preceding sovereign, who yet had not shown indifference to the attractions of poetry, music, and the stage. But Henry the Eighth, according to the testimony of Hall, was a proficient, not less in arms than in arts; he exercised himself daily in shooting, singing, dancing, wrestling, "casting of the bar, playing at the recorders, flute, virginals, and in setting of songs, making of ballettes; and did set two goodly masses, every of them five parts, which were sung oftentimes in his chapel and afterwards in divers other places." Early in his reign he appointed Richard Gibson, one of his father's company of players, to be "yeoman tailor to the king," and subsequently "serjeant-at-arms and of the tents and revels," and in 1546 he granted a patent to Sir Thomas Cawarden, conferring upon him the office "*Magistri Jocorum, Revellorum et Mascorum, omnium et singulorum nostrorum, vulgariter nuncupatorum Revells et Masks*," with a salary of ten pounds sterling—a very modest stipend; but then Sir Thomas enjoyed other emoluments from his situation as one of the gentlemen of the privy chamber. The Yeoman of the Revels, who assisted the Master and probably discharged the chief duties of his office, received an annual allowance of nine pounds two shillings and sixpence, and eight players of interludes were awarded incomes of

three pounds six shillings and eightpence. To these remote appointments of "yeoman tailor," and "Master of the Revels," is due that office of "Licensor of plays," which, strange to say, is extant and even flourishing in the present year of grace.

As Chalmers has pointed out, however, in his Apology for the Believers in the Shakespearian Papers, the King's Chamberlain, or, as he was styled in all formal proceedings of the time, Camerarius Hospitii, had the government and superintendence of the King's hunting and revels, of the comedians, musicians, and other royal servants, and was, by virtue of the original constitution of his office, the real Master of the Revels, "the great director of the sports of the court by night as well as of the sports of the field by day." Still the odium of his office, especially in its relation to plays and players, could not but attach to his subordinates and deputies, the Masters of the Revels; "tasteless and officious tyrants," as Gifford describes them in a note to Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*, "who acted with little discrimination, and were always more ready to prove their authority than their judgment, the most hateful of them all being Sir Henry Herbert," appointed by Charles the First to an office which naturally expired when the Puritans suppressed the stage and did their utmost to exterminate the players. At the Restoration, however, Herbert resumed his duties; but he found, as Chalmers relates, "that the recent times had given men new habits of reasoning, notions of privileges, and propensities to resistance. He applied to the courts of justice for redress; but the verdicts of judges were contradictory; he appealed to the ruler of the State, but without receiving redress or exciting sympathy; like other disputed jurisdictions the authority of the Master of the Revels continued to be oppressive till the Revolution taught new lessons to all parties."

It is to be observed, however, that the early severities and arbitrary caprices to which the players were subjected, were not attributable solely to the action of the Masters of the Revels. The Privy Council was constant in its interference with the affairs of the theatre. A suspicion was for a long time rife that the dramatic representations of the sixteenth century touched upon matters of religion or points of doctrine, and oftentimes contained matters "tending to sedition and to the contempt of sundry good orders and laws." Pro-



clamations were from time to time issued inhibiting the players and forbidding the representation of plays and interludes. In 1551 even the actors attached to the households of noblemen were not allowed to perform without special leave from the Privy Council; and the authorities of Gray's Inn, once famous for its dramatic representations, expressly ordered that there should be "no comedies called interludes in this house out of term time, but when the Feast of the Nativity of our Lrd is solemnly observed." Upon the accession of Queen Mary in 1553 dramatic representations, whether or not touching upon points of religious doctrine, appear to have been forbidden for a period of two years. In 1556 the Star Chamber issued orders addressed to the justices of the peace of every county in the kingdom, with instructions that they should be rigorously enforced, forbidding the representation of dramatic productions of all kinds. Still in Mary's reign, certain miracle plays, designed to inculcate and enforce the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion, were now and then encouraged by the public authorities; and in 1557 the Queen sanctioned various sports and pageants of a dramatic kind apparently for the entertainment of King Philip then arrived from Flanders, and of the Russian ambassador who had reached England a short time before.

The players had for a long while few temptations to resist authority whether rightfully or wrongfully exercised. Sufferance was the badge of their tribe. They felt constrained to submit without question or repining, when loud-toned commands were addressed to them, dreading lest worse things should come about. The gaol and the whipping-post seemed to be always immediate possibilities in connection with their calling. It was a sort of satisfaction to them, at last, to find themselves governed by so distinguished a personage as the Lord Chamberlain, or even by his inferior officer the Master of the Revels. It was true that he might, as he often did, deal with them absurdly and severely; but even in this abuse of his power there was valuable recognition of their profession—it became invested with a measure of lawfulness, otherwise often denied it by common opinion. How it chanced that a member of the royal household ruled not only the dramatic representations of the court, but controlled, arbitrarily enough, plays, and

players generally, no one appeared to know, or thought it worth while to enquire. As Colley Cibber writes: "Though in all the letters patent for acting plays, &c., since King Charles the First's time, there has been no mention of the Lord Chamberlain, or of any subordination to his command or authority, yet it was still taken for granted that no letters patent, by the bare omission of such a great officer's name, could have superseded or taken out of his hands that power which time out of mind he always had exercised over the theatre. But as the truth of the question seemed to be wrapt in a great deal of obscurity in the old laws, made in former reigns, relating to players, &c., it may be no wonder that the best companies of actors should be desirous of taking shelter under the visible power of a Lord Chamberlain, who, they knew, had at his pleasure, favoured and protected, or borne hard upon them; but be all this as it may, a Lord Chamberlain, from whencever his power might be derived, had, till of later years, had always an implicit obedience paid to it."

Among the duties undertaken by the Lord Chamberlain was the licensing or refusing new plays, with the suppression of such portions of them as he might deem objectionable; which province was assigned to his inferior, the Master of the Revels. This, be it understood, was long before the passing of the Licensing Act of 1737, which, indeed, although it gave legal sanction to the power of the Lord Chamberlain, did not really invest him with much more power than he had often before exercised. Even in Charles the Second's time, the representation of *The Maid's Tragedy*, of Beaumont and Fletcher, had been forbidden by an order from the Lord Chamberlain. It was conjectured that "the killing of the King in that play, while the tragical death of King Charles the First was then so fresh in people's memory, was an object too horribly impious for a public entertainment;" and, accordingly, the courtly poet Waller occupied himself in altering the catastrophe of the story, so as to save the life of the King. Another opinion prevailed to the effect that the murder accomplished by the heroine Evadne offered "a dangerous example to other Evadnes then shining at court in the same rank of royal distinction." In the same reign also Nat Lee's tragedy of *Lucius Junius Brutus*, "was silenced after three performances;"

it being objected that the plan and sentiments of it had too boldly vindicated, and might inflame, Republican sentiments. A prologue, by Dryden, to the *Prophetess*, was prohibited, on account of certain "familiar metaphorical sneers at the revolution," it was supposed to contain, at a time when King William was prosecuting the war in Ireland. Bank's tragedy of *Mary Queen of Scotland* was withheld from the stage for twenty years, owing to "the profound penetration of the Master of the Revels, who saw political spectres in it, that never appeared in the presentation." From Cibber's version of *Richard the Third*, the first act was wholly expunged, lest "the distresses of King Henry the Sixth, who is killed by Richard in the first act, should put weak people too much in mind of King James, then living in France." In vain did Cibber petition the Master of the Revels "for the small indulgence of a speech or two, that the other four acts might limp on with a little less absurdity. No! He had not leisure to consider what might be separately inoffensive!" So, too, some eight years before the passing of the *Licensing Act*, Gay's ballad opera of "*Polly*," designed as a sequel to the *Beggar's Opera*, incurred the displeasure of the Chamberlain, and was denied the honours of representation.

Nor was it only on political grounds that the Lord Chamberlain or the Master of the Revels exercised his power. The *View of the Stage*, published by the non-juring clergyman, Jeremy Collier, in 1697, first drew public attention to the immorality and profanity of the dramatic writers of that period. The diatribes and rebukes of Collier, if here and there a trifle overstrained, were certainly, for the most part, provoked by the nature of the case, and were justified by the result. Even Cibber, who had been cited as one of the offenders, admits that "his calling our dramatic writers to this strict account had a very wholesome effect upon those who wrote after this time. They were now a great deal more upon their guard . . . and, by degrees, the fair sex came again to fill the boxes on the first day of a new comedy without fear or censure." For some time, it seems, the ladies had been afraid of venturing "bare-faced" to a new comedy, till they had been assured that they could do it without risk of affront; "or if," as Cibber says, "their curiosity was too strong for their patience, they took care,

at least, to save appearances, and rarely came upon the first days of acting but in masks, then daily worn and admitted in the pit, the side-boxes, and gallery." This reform of the drama, it is to be observed, was really effected, not by the agency of the Chamberlain or any other court official, but by force of the just criticism, forcibly delivered, of a private individual. But, now, following the example of Collier, the Master of the Revels, in his turn, insisted upon amendment in this matter, and oftentimes forbade the performance of whole scenes that he judged to be vicious or immoral. He had constituted himself a Censor Morum; a character in which the modern Licensor of Plays still commends himself to our notice.

Moreover, the Chamberlain had arrogated to himself the right of interfering in dramatic affairs upon all occasions that he judged fitting. Upon his authority the theatres were closed at any moment, even for a period of six weeks, in the case of the death of the sovereign. If any disputes occurred between managers and actors, even in relation to so small a matter as the privileges of the latter, the Chamberlain interfered to arrange the difficulty according to his own notion of justice. No actor could quit the company of one patent theatre, to join the forces of the other, without the permission of the Chamberlain, in addition to the formal discharge of his manager. Powell, the actor, even suffered imprisonment on this account, although it was thought as well, after a day or two, to abandon the proceedings that had been taken against him. "Upon this occasion," says Cibber, with a mysterious air, and in very involved terms, "behind the scenes at Drury Lane, a person of great quality, in my hearing, inquiring of Powell into the nature of his offence . . . told him, that if he had had patience, or spirit enough to have staid in his confinement till he had given him notice of it, he would have found him a handsomer way of coming out of it!" Of the same actor, Powell, it is recorded that he once, at Will's Coffee House, "in a dispute about playhouse affairs, struck a gentleman whose family had been some time masters of it." A complaint of the actor's violence was lodged at the Chamberlain's office, and Powell having a part in the play announced for performance upon the following day, an order was sent to silence the whole company, and to close the theatre, although it was admitted that

the managers had been without cognisance of their actor's misconduct! "However," Cibber narrates, "this order was obeyed, and remained in force for two or three days, till the same authority was pleased, or advised, to revoke it. From the measures this injured gentleman took for his redress, it may be judged how far it was taken for granted that a Lord Chamberlain had an absolute power over the theatre." An attempt, however, upon the authority of the Chamberlain, to imprison Doggett, the actor, for breach of his engagement with the patentees of Drury Lane Theatre, met with signal discomfiture. Doggett forthwith applied to the Lord Chief Justice Holt for his discharge, under the Habeas Corpus Act, and readily obtained it, with, it may be gathered, liberal compensation for the violence to which he had been subjected.

The proceedings of the Lord Chamberlain had, indeed, become most oppressive. Early in 1720, the Duke of Newcastle, then Lord Chamberlain, took upon himself to close Drury Lane Theatre. Steele, then one of the patentees, addressed the public upon the subject. He had lived in friendship with the duke; he owed his seat in parliament to the duke's influence. He commenced with saying, "The injury which I have received, great as it is, has nothing in it so painful as that it comes from whence it does. When I complained of it in a private letter to the Chamberlain, he was pleased to send his secretary to me with a message to forbid me writing, speaking, corresponding, or applying to him in any manner whatsoever. Since he has been pleased to send an English gentleman a banishment from his person and counsels in a style thus royal, I doubt not but that the reader will justify me in the method I take to explain this matter to the town." Steele could obtain no redress, however. He was virtually dispossessed of his rights as patentee. He estimated his loss at nine thousand eight hundred pounds, and concluded his statement of the case with the words:—"But it is apparent the King is grossly and shamelessly injured . . . I never did one act to provoke this attempt, nor does the Chamberlain pretend to assign any direct reason of forfeiture, but openly and wittingly declares that he will ruin Steele. . . . The Lord Chamberlain and many others may, perhaps, have done more for the House of Hanover than I have, but I am the only man in his

majesty's dominions who did all he could." For some months Steele was replaced by other patentees, of whom Cibber was one, more submissive to "the lawful monarch of the stage," as Dennis designated him; but in 1721, upon the intervention of Walpole, Steele was restored to his privileges. It is not clear, however, that he took any legal measures to obtain compensation for the wrong done him. Cibber is silent upon the subject; because, it has been suggested, the Chamberlain had been instrumental in obtaining him the appointment of poet laureate, which could hardly have devolved upon him in right of his poetic qualifications.

Nevertheless Cibber had been active in organising a form of opposition to the authority of the Chamberlain and the Master of the Revels, which, although it seemed of a trifling kind, had yet its importance. For it turned upon the question of fees. The holders of the patents considered themselves sole judges of the plays proper to be acted in their theatre. The Master of the Revels claimed his fee of forty shillings for each play produced. The managers, it seems, were at liberty to represent new plays without consulting him and to spare him the trouble of reading the same—provided always they paid him his fees. But these they now thought it expedient to withhold from him. Cibber was deputed to attend the Master of the Revels and to enquire into the justice of his demand, with full powers to settle the dispute amicably. Charles Killebrew at this time filled the office, having succeeded his father Thomas, who had obtained the appointment of Master of the Revels upon the death of Sir Henry Herbert in 1673. Killebrew could produce no warrant for his demand. Cibber concluded with telling him that "as his pretensions were not backed with any visible instrument of right, and as his strongest plea was custom, the managers could not so far extend their complaisance as to continue the payment of fees upon so slender a claim to them. From that time neither their plays nor his fees gave either party any further trouble." In 1725 Killebrew was succeeded as Master of the Revels by Charles Henry Lea, who for some years continued to exercise "such authority as was not opposed, and received such fees as he could find the managers willing to pay."

The first step towards legislation in regard to the theatres and the licensing of plays was made in 1734, when Sir John Barnard moved the House of Commons

"for leave to bring in a bill for restraining the number of houses for playing of interludes and for the better regulating common players of interludes." It was represented that great mischief had been done to the City of London by the playhouses; youth had been corrupted, vice encouraged, trade and industry prejudiced. Already the number of theatres in London was double that of Paris. In addition to the opera-house, the French playhouse in the Haymarket, and the theatres in Covent Garden, Drury Lane, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Goodman's Fields, there was now a project to erect a new playhouse in St. Martin's-le-Grand. It was no less surprising than shameful to see so great a change in the temper and inclination of the British people; "we now exceeded in levity even the French themselves, from whom we learned these and many other ridiculous customs, as much unsuitable to the mien and manners of an Englishman or a Scot as they were agreeable to the air and levity of a Monsieur." Moreover it was remarked that, to the amazement and indignation of all Europe, Italian singers received here "set salaries equal to those of the Lords of the Treasury and Judges of England!" The bill was duly brought in, but was afterwards dropped, "on account of a clause offered to be inserted . . . for enlarging the power of the Lord Chamberlain with respect to the licensing of plays." It is curious to find that Tony Aston, a popular comedian of the time, who had been bred an attorney, was, upon his own petition, permitted to deliver a speech in the House of Commons against Sir John Barnard's bill.

But two years later the measure was substantially passed into law. The theatres had certainly given, in the meantime, serious provocation to the authorities. The power of the Chamberlain and the Master of the Revels had been derided. Playhouses were opened and plays produced without any kind of license. At the Haymarket, under the management of Fielding, who styled his actors "The Great Mogul's Comedians," the bills announcing that they had "dropped from the clouds," (in mockery, probably, of "His Majesty's Servants" at Drury-lane, or of another troop describing themselves as "The Comedians of His Majesty's Revels"), the plays produced had been in the nature of political lampoons. Walpole and his arts of government were openly satirised, Fielding, having no particular desire to

spare the prime minister, whose patronage he had vainly solicited. In the play entitled "Pasquin, a Dramatic Satire on the Times; being the rehearsal of two plays, viz., a Comedy, called The Election, and a Tragedy, called The Life and Death of Common Sense," the satire was chiefly aimed at the electoral corruptions of the age, the abuses prevailing in the learned professions, and the servility of placemen who derided public virtue, and denied the existence of political honesty. Pasquin, it may be noted, was received with extraordinary favour, enjoyed a run of fifty nights, and proved a source of both fame and profit to its author. But the play of "The Historical Register of 1736," produced in the spring of 1737, contained allusions of a more pointed and personal kind, and gravely offended the Government. Indeed, the result could hardly have been otherwise. Walpole himself was brought upon the stage and under the name of Quidam violently caricatured; he was exhibited silencing noisy patriots with bribes, and then joining with them in a dance—the proceedings being explained by Medley, another of the characters, supposed to be an author: "Sir, every one of these patriots has a hole in his pocket, as Mr. Quidam the fiddler there knows; so that he intends to make them dance till all the money has fallen through, which he will pick up again, and so not lose a halfpenny by his generosity!" The play indeed abounded in satire of the boldest kind, in witty and unsparing invective; as the biographer of Fielding acknowledges, there was much in the work "well calculated both to offend and alarm a wary minister of state." Soon both Pasquin and the Historical Register were brought under the notice of the cabinet. Walpole felt "that it would be inexpedient to allow the stage to become the vehicle of anti-ministerial abuse." The Licensing Act was resolved upon.

The new measure was not avowedly aimed at Fielding, however. It was preceded by incidents of rather a suspicious kind. Gifford, the manager of the Goodman's Fields theatre, professing to have received from some anonymous writer a play of singular scurrility, carried the work to the Prime Minister. The obsequious manager was rewarded with one thousand pounds for his patriotic conduct, and the libellous nature of the play he had surrendered was made the excuse for the legislation that ensued. It was freely



observed at the time, however, that Gifford had profited more by suppressing the play than he could possibly have gained by representing it, and that there was something more than natural in the appositeness of his receipt of it. If honest, it was suggested that he had been trapped by a Government spy, who had sent him the play, solely that he might deal with it as he did; but it was rather assumed that he had dishonestly curried favour with the authorities, and sold himself for treasury gold. The play in question was never acted or printed; nor was the name of the author, or of the person from whom the manager professed to have received it, ever disclosed. Horace Walpole, indeed, boldly ascribed it to Fielding, and asserted that he had discovered among his father's papers an imperfect copy of the play. But the statement has not obtained much acceptance.

The ministry hurried on their Licensing Bill. It was entitled "An act to explain and amend so much of an act made in the twelfth year of Queen Anne, entitled 'an act for reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and vagrants, into one act of parliament; and for the more effectual punishing such rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent,' as relates to common players of interludes." But its chief object—undisclosed by its title, was the enactment that, for the future, every dramatic piece, including prologues and epilogues, should, previous to performance, receive the license of the Lord Chamberlain, and that, without his permission, no London theatre, unprotected by a patent, should open its doors. Read a first time on the twenty-fourth of May, 1737, the bill was passed through both houses with such despatch that it received the royal assent on the eighth of June following. It was opposed in the House of Commons by Mr. Pulteney, and in the House of Lords by the Earl of Chesterfield, whose impressive speech on the occasion is one of the few specimens that survive of the parliamentary eloquence of the period. With the passing of the Licensing Act, Fielding's career as manager and dramatist was brought to a close. He was constrained to devote himself to the study of law, and, subsequently to the production of novels. And with the passing of the Licensing Act, terminated the existence of the Master of the

Revels; the Act, indeed, made no mention of him, ignored him altogether. He survived, however, under another name—still as the Chamberlain's subordinate and deputy. Thenceforward he was known as the Examiner of Plays and Licensor of Playhouses. It may be worth while to consider his career and proceedings in those characters upon some future occasion.

#### SOWING AND REAPING.

We live by thought, and by the men who spake  
The darkness into light;  
Who bade the spirit's morning break  
Forth from the womb of night;  
And in that great deliverance  
Revealed a new world at a glance.  
Yet oft that living thought is born of death.  
Arid the stern land lies—  
No springs invisible beneath,  
No rain-clouds in the skies;  
The martyr's blood, and tears, and toil  
Alone may irrigate the soil.  
The crimson fountain bubbles in deep gloom,  
The funeral pyre's a-glow,  
And all around the yawning tomb  
The harvest 'gins to grow.  
Lo! forth the sturdy reapers come  
To shout the welcome Harvest Home!  
The sickle sheathed, the crop is gathered in  
And garnered in the brain;  
Not all the kings who victories win  
May root it out again;  
Nor check the spread, through years unknown,  
Of future harvests to be sown.

#### SOME ACCOUNT OF THE MOCK-ANGLIANS.

MOCK-ANGLIA, an island whereon the sun disdains to shine, where fog reigns for months together, and rain falls two days out of three, is inhabited by a race as dull and heavy as the sky above their heads—a race among whom physical beauty is rarely to be seen. Its maidens are either mere waxen-faced, glassy-eyed inanities, or they are of a repulsive, robust type, comparable to cabbage-roses and full-blown peonies rather than to the more delicately beautiful children of Flora; developing, with matronhood, into creatures of elephantine proportions, suggesting the idea that, instead of being composed, as the childish rhyme says, "of sugar and spice, and everything nice," they are made up of steaks and sirloins. Unlike their Gallic sisters, who never dress unbecomingly—a fact constant iteration has so established, that we dare not say that the veriest feminine guys we ever saw hailed from la belle France—the Mock-Anglian ladies know not what taste means, and revel in violent contrasts and inharmo-

nious combination of colour; while in happy ignorance of the natural ugliness of their feet, they persist in encasing them in the most hideous coverings the boot-maker can devise. The best bred among them are as stiff and formal in manner as they are constrained and ungraceful in movement; ease, elegance, and refinement being conspicuous by their absence, and they are absolutely destitute of any of the thousand-and-one indescribable fascinations by which your Frenchwoman is supposed to make one forgive and forget her want of beauty.

Who, however, would look for refinement in women blessed with such healthy, not to say gross, appetites, that the only Christmas gift they care to receive is a fine fat goose? At that jovial season, it is the custom for every gentleman moving in good society to send a goose to the lady he is in the habit of visiting. A lady with many friends will thus find her drawing-room filled with eatables, and be enabled, by the simple process of counting her prizes, to tell the number of her admirers; so many geese, so many lovers! A love of strong drink naturally accompanies a liking for strong meat. Although it is the rule for the ladies to retire from the dinner-table after drinking a small glass of wine; while the gentlemen are tossing off port, claret, madeira, and champagne in the dining-room, they empty a few bottles of brandy in the drawing-room. Women, too, form the bulk of customers at the gin palaces, where men are incessantly engaged, in front of huge coloured barrels surrounding the portrait of the first lady of the land, in supplying the demands of thirsty fair ones. Money in hand, they approach the bar in a reverential manner; ask in a subdued voice for their favourite tippie, which they absorb with an icy, silent seriousness. Then they sit motionless on a form, ecstatically contemplating the barrels aforesaid, until, rendered desperate by the sight, they rummage their pockets, find more money, and return to the bar for another dram; and so the process goes on until their funds are exhausted. So necessary is this indulgence to the sex, that, while all other distractions are strictly forbidden upon Sunday, it is enough for the gin palace to keep its doors shut, but unfastened, so that its patronesses have only to push, and they are in. "Church and State seem to be of accord in recognising the danger of depriving this frightful

destitution, for a single day, of the means of stupefying itself out of the consciousness of its distress."

If we did not disdain alliteration, we might shortly describe the men of Mock-Anglia as muscular money-making madmen. Madness has been their portion for generations. Their own poet—at least they call him one, although he wrote like a drunken savage—the divine Williams, testified that a lunatic would pass unnoticed among them, since they were all madder than he. They are easily known. When you come across an awkwardly-built, strongly-framed individual, with a mottled face, staring blue eyes, red hair, and bushy whiskers to match; whose long arms end in great fists, which he is apt to put into action upon the slightest provocation, you may guess you have a Mock-Anglian before you. If he affect an indifference to all around, is morose, stolid, and silent, save bursting out now and again into a laugh, apropos of nothing; if he be arrayed in a short plaid cloth coat, with continuations of the same, you may, in Yankee phrase, bet your pile upon it.

Poetry, wit, music, art, find no appreciation among these unimaginative, slow-thoughted, phlegmatic people, whose sole aim in life is to make money. In this they are tolerably successful, seeing they have made their capital the world's mart, their country the richest, if the unhappiest, on the face of the earth. Implanted in their hearts in their tenderest years, the love of money has destroyed the family affections, and left no room for compassion and charity. You may lie mortally wounded, your blood may stream over the pavement of the most frequented thoroughfare, without a passer-by stopping to offer you the slightest aid. Greed has sent love to the wall; to marry for affection's sake is a thing unheard of. The young Mock-Anglian weds a fortune, and that secured, loses no time in deserting the wife whose money enables him to cut a figure at the club, the gaming-house, and the "finish." The last-named is so called because it is a place where the libertine, the idler, the drunkard, the pickpocket, the rogue, and the ennuied aristocrat, finish the night together. In the small hours the "finishes" are crowded with noblemen and members of Parliament, who, after treating themselves with copious draughts of champagne and "trois-six," amuse themselves by making pretty girls intoxicated, before sending them into con-

vulsions by forcing them to swallow a compound of vinegar, salt, pepper, and mustard, and then bringing them to by drenching them in coffee, porter, and punch. If a man does live with his wife, he habitually ill-uses her, reserving his endearments, his compliments, and his caresses, for his horses — for the very sufficient reason that a horse wins money, and a woman spends it.

The love of horse-flesh is so common to all classes, that the two great national holidays are the races at Epsom and Derby, held in May and June. Everybody who can afford it hunts, and he whose purse will not allow indulgence in that expensive sport, saves his reputation by a little chicanery. Taking care to inform his friends that he is going out of town for a few days' hunting, he leaves his hotel to retire to a lodging at the other end of the city. There he remains in hiding until he is expected home again. Then, donning a hunting coat, the cheat goes to a splashing-house. Upon entering he states from what county he wishes it to be supposed he has just returned, these convenient establishments being provided with muds of all the hunting shires. Naming his county, the customer mounts an automaton horse, which trots, prances, and throws mud over its rider exactly as a real horse would do travelling across country. The operation performed, he dismounts, pays some three shillings, and departs, whip in hand, to exhibit his bespattered self in Bond Street, Piccadilly, or Pall Mall. To those he passes, or to whom he speaks, the mud splashes on the impostor's coat afford, if not proof positive, at least proof presumptive, that he is a landowner of the county the dirt of which he carries. Some of these exquisites, by frequenting splashing-houses, running into debt, borrowing largely, and spending profusely, succeed in carrying off an heiress, and settle down comfortably for life. Others, less clever or less lucky, find their way to prison instead of to church, unless they take a continental trip in good time. The Mock-Anglians have one national pastime peculiar to themselves. A stake is driven into the ground; upon this is fixed the wooden effigy of a black woman, holding a short clay pipe between the lips. The players, armed with heavy sticks, retire a certain distance and throw in turn at the doll; the player breaking the pipe the greatest number of times in so many throws being adjudged the

winner. This game is played everywhere, by high and low, and is called "cricket."

The first of April is almost as great a holiday as the day of the race for "the Derby of two thousand guineas;" for on All Fools' Day is held the great regatta between the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which, commencing at Westminster, takes its course up the grand river, past the Houses of Parliament, to the parks of Greenwich and Richmond. A foreign visitor thus describes the event of 1871. "This year the regatta took place at ten o'clock, and from five in the morning the gigantic capital was in movement. The banks of the Thames were lined with the carriages of my lord, and the omnibuses and carts of the street hawkers. The river was crowded with two thousand steamers and miles of small boats. The emotion that passed during the race was indescribable, the distance being six miles. The Prince of Wales was in a boat with thirty distinguished persons, and led the way up the river. The bridges and railway trains by the river were crowded, and bands of music paraded the streets, some with black faces. The race ended by the triumph of Cambridge and the dethronement of Oxford. A cannon from the Tower announced the victors, and light-blue, the colour of the Cambridge, was hanging all over the city. After the regatta a hundred thousand restaurants were opened to the public, who flocked into them to drink their popular beer. In the villas in the neighbourhood of the race, dinners were given to all Cambridge people, to the number of several thousands, the young people afterwards enjoying the ball."

Hospitality is one of the few virtues of these odd islanders; the richer people thinking nothing of receiving ten thousand guests at an evening party or rout. Of late years the middle classes have taken to giving routs likewise, at which they eat indigestible pastry, washed down with port, sherry, Madeira and liqueurs, finishing up with tea, and grogs of rum, brandy, and gin; for to make his friends drunk is the pride of a host. At these parties the ladies count upon losing some of their belongings, for there are sure to be some thieves in the company, however carefully selected. Theft, we are sorry to say, is held venial in Mock-Anglia, where everybody steals if he has the chance. Whenever a public functionary can rob the public or the Government he does so; and no obloquy attaches to him if found out, particularly

if the Government be the victim, for as the Government is the greatest of all robbers, to rob a robber can be no crime.

"Rosbif" is the favourite meat of these people, who are enormous eaters and inordinate drinkers; their chief drinks being "portare-beer," "af-an-af," and a fiery spirit called "ouisky." They also imbibe great quantities of tea, taking that beverage regularly four times a day; in the morning and afternoon, mixed with milk; after dinner and supper, qualified with rum. Cooks worthy of the name are unknown among them; if they existed, their talent would be thrown away upon a race of whom Mr. Phineas Fogg, Esq., may be accepted as a fair specimen. This gentleman betakes himself to the Reform Club at half-past eleven in the morning; breakfasts at noon upon boiled fish with Reading sauce, a slice of scarlet rosbif with mushroom condiment, a pudding stuffed with gooseberries and rhubarb stalks, a piece of Chester cheese, and a few cups of tea. At forty-seven minutes past twelve precisely, he repairs to the hall to receive an uncut copy of the Times, with which he occupies himself until a quarter past four, when he exchanges it for the Daily Telegraph. This serves to pass away the time until he is ready for dinner, a repetition of breakfast with the addition of some Royal British sauce. Dinner lasts till twenty minutes to eight, when this model club man returns to the hall, and gives himself up to the perusal of the Morning Post. A few weeks of this routine should, we think, suffice to qualify a man for the membership of the Spleen's Club, composed of intending suicides, which loses a fixed number of its members every month, the metropolitan monuments and bridges affording them every convenience for taking a leap for death, despite the vigilance of the police. Some, however, prefer to die in a foreign land. The president of the club was lately making anxious inquiries in Paris as to when the Vendôme Column would be re-erected, as he had resolved to devote himself to it as a New Year's gift. Mock-Anglian eccentrics are extraordinarily interested in this column. Five years since one of them bet a fellow-countryman twenty thousand pounds—they are magnificent bettors, these islanders—that he would throw himself from the top of the column uninjured, thanks to a parachute he had devised. A sudden call to Australia prevented the wager being settled then; but the parties to it met a

short time back, and the parachutist announced himself ready. His friend demurred, arguing the bet was void, the column having been pulled down; but the other declared there had been no stipulation as to the height of the column, and if the Communists had left only the pedestal standing, he was entitled to the benefit. The trial came off. The jumper, spite of his parachute, fell heavily on the steps, but won his wager, and the loser immediately handed over the twenty thousand pounds.

If there be any truth in sanitary science, the capital of Mock-Anglia should be free from all diseases born of over-crowding, for we are assured that none of its houses harbour more than one family. It is the custom to keep the outer door fastened, and thanks to a well regulated knocking code, those within can tell what manner of person seeks admittance. The milkman, the butcher, the baker, the sweep, the beggar, and the servant knock one knock, as if to say, "allow me to come in." The welcome postman and the unwelcome tax-collector give two knocks, intimating, "It is my business to enter this house." Three raps, given with an air of command, indicate that the master of the house, a friend, or a member of the family, wields the knocker, crying "Open!" Four knocks express, "I mean to come in," and show that a person of consequence waits without. He who gives four knocks, and, after a pause, repeats them with a certain proud impetuosity, is either a milord, an Indian nabob, a Russian prince, a German baron, or an Italian marquis, saying, "Open quickly, I wish to honour you with a visit." This system is particularly convenient for the servants, as they can regulate their movements accordingly. Not that they would think of hurrying themselves for anybody, for they look upon themselves as mere household ornaments. Whilst his master works, the Mock-Anglian flunkey wears his boots and drinks his wine; considering himself an injured individual if he is paid less than a Prussian state official, or has less opportunity of stealing than a Russian one.

Mock-Anglia is governed by a parliament of two chambers, that called the lower house being by far the most powerful of the two. At the present time, the men of the greatest mark in it are Sir Gladstone, Sir Dilke, and the Fenian advocate, Mr. Bradlaugh, the millionaire. These gentlemen are not paid for their



labours, but enjoy the privilege of travelling free of charge by the parliamentary trains which all railway companies are compelled to run for their especial use. Among the most prominent members of the upper house are Lord Selkirk, the descendant of the original monarch of all he surveyed, and Lord Chesterfield, who fought Tom Sayers, and married Mazeppa Menken. Not long ago the aristocratic chamber lost one of its greatest ornaments by the death of Lord Northbrooke, whose real name was Sir Francis Barins, he being a grandson of the founder of the opulent banking dynasty, a fact impelling an astonished foreigner to ask, "Why should a man able to call himself Barins, not have been contented with the name derived from his father?" Another notable peer was the late Lord Lonsdale, the inventor of postage stamps, a wealthy noble who always subscribed a million to any enterprise touching the honour of his country. Like all his countrymen, this freehanded peer had his eccentricity, which in his case took the shape of dogs. At his splendid palace at Richmond, Lord Lonsdale used to entertain the politicians of all Europe, the grandees of his own land, and the fairest queens of the stage, with regal hospitality. When his guests were assembled in his magnificent drawing-room, the host would come in, carrying a large bag, full of bones, and followed by a troop of dogs. A bone thrown here, a bone thrown there, soon brought about a canine scrimmage, and the wholesale destruction of costly furniture, to the intense delight of the noble master of the house, who cared little whether the company around him were pleased or disgusted with the entertainment.

If the nobles have to be content with playing second fiddle in politics, it is made up to them in other ways. The clergy, to a man, are their very humble servants, the church being a mere instrument in the hands of three hundred privileged families. Yet it should be independent enough; the revenue it derives from tithes alone amounts to ten millions per annum; and the poorest living brings in four hundred a year to its holder, who, whenever he reads the burial service, receives a certain per centage upon the value of the property the dead has left behind. There is an unusual connection between the clerical and medical professions. No doctor can practise without a diploma from the bishop of the diocese, and, before he can obtain it,

must prove that he is already in receipt of fifteen hundred pounds a year.

The Mock-Anglians have been called a nation of shopkeepers, and not without good reason. When they wanted to induce the Sultan of Zanzibar to put down the slave-trade in his dominions, they confided the delicate mission to the firm of Bartle Brothers. A very odd adventure, by the way, befel these mercantile negotiators. Making a journey up country, the head partner and his son outstripped their escort, and lost their way. Tired and hungry, they came upon a negro's hut, and asked for food. An old woman gave them some eggs, which the envoy made into an omelet, popping into his pan sundry little black balls he saw hanging from the roof, which he took for mushrooms. Just as the Mock-Anglians had finished the meal, the owner of the hut walked in, and being told what his visitors had done, exclaimed "Miserable strangers, you have eaten all my war trophies!" The mushrooms were the dried ears of the foes he had slain in battle. We are not surprised to learn the rash ambassadors were ill from indigestion for four days afterwards.

There is plenty of law, but very little justice, to be had in this strangely ruled country. In civil causes the judge decides according to the rank of the parties to the suit. In criminal cases, the fate of the accused depends upon how the presiding judge has dined. If he has made an unsatisfactory meal, he will sum up in something like the following fashion: "Gentlemen of the jury, you cannot have any doubt as to the guilt of the prisoner; his face is enough to hang him!" If he has dined well, the prisoner's acquittal follows as a matter of course. A trial, however, is not such a simple affair as might be expected under such a system. Before a couple of rogues could receive their deserts at the assizes of a certain county, a hundred and fifty officials had to be called together, and two thousand four hundred pounds expended. Still, when it pleases them, the judges can dispense with forms and make short work of an offender. M. Vermersch, sometime editor of that immaculate organ, the *Pere Duchesne*, found it convenient to leave his beloved Paris, for the Mock-Anglian capital, when his efforts to pour oil—rock-oil, indeed—upon his country's wounds ceased to be gratefully appreciated. Here he started a new journal, concluding his opening article with, "The best thing I can wish

for France is that she may one day enjoy political liberty, as they do in this country; although I must confess its institutions stand in need of divers modifications." Next morning, M. Vermersch was summoned before the Lord Chief Justice, who, in excellent French, said:—"Sir, for all I care, you may insult your own country as long as you please; I have nothing to do with that. But it is my duty to warn you, that if you either abuse or praise Mock-Anglia, I shall lock you up in a mad-house, from which, as your Government is not likely to interfere, you will probably never escape!" Of course the friendly hint was taken, and the people of benighted Mock-Anglia deprived of much valuable criticism, tending to open their eyes to the defects in the institutions of which they are so stupidly proud. There is no denying that they are proud of them, for vanity is their special characteristic. They actually maintain that their language is superior to any modern tongue, while they are so ignorant of it, they are not aware that, like the Chinese, they have two languages, a written and an unwritten one. It is true, nevertheless; for while they write, "Chatham," "Southwark," "Southampton," they say, "Jet'aime," "Sousoure," "Stpntn!"

Mock-Anglia is a country so little known that we have had to gather our account of it piecemeal from the reports of adventurous foreigners, anxious to enlighten their less travelled and less informed countrymen. This must be our excuse for the incompleteness of our description. Doubtless, we shall hear more of it in time, and possibly become as familiar with its strange customs, and odd people, as we already are with those of Atlantis and Utopia.

## SAFELY MARRIED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AN EXPERIENCE," "DAISY'S TRIALS," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER IX.

I FOUND Allan still in the library; he was sitting now at his writing-table, and seemed to have been occupying himself, for a pile of letters was beside him.

He rose to meet me when I opened the door, and I was glad of his arm across the great room, for I felt tired out and tottery.

"Well?" he asked hopelessly, when he had seated me.

"I can thankfully and honestly tell you that it is more 'well' or, at least, less ill

than I could have supposed possible." I tried to speak very impressively.

"Elfie has beguiled you." Though that was all his answer I saw a relieved expression, a relaxation of over-tense muscles come over his face.

"She has not even cared to try to do so. I have been, as it were, searching her and finding her out. I only wish you could, unseen, have heard all that passed; possibly, then, you would feel less sternly, more pitifully, towards the foolish, frivolous, fantastic child."

"A man, who hearing his wife so spoken of can only think that she is judged with too lenient judgment is to be envied, is he not, Miss Hammond?"

It would be tedious to relate in detail all that passed between us. To begin with, I once again soundly rated Mr. Braithwait. He said no word in self-defence, though I knew how much there was that he might say. The poor, poor young fellow was only too glad to know that I could feel he had been to blame.

If I could have heaped all blame on him, and made him believe in an Elfie angelically good and true, I should have made him happy. Conscious of this, the more my heart wept for him the sharper was my tongue.

When I had well scolded at Allan—I talked of Elfie, of course for his sake, making the very best of her. I pleaded for kindness for her, for tenderness of judgment towards her, for patience with her—if only such kindness and tenderness and patience as one would wish to show towards an often naughty, and an always heedless and thoughtless, child. I assured him of my belief that sin had no more root in her than had seriousness, and that towards such sin as that for which he had believed her to be ripe she had not gone one conscious step. I told him, of course, of her rage and her amazement when I had shown her towards what her present conduct would be supposed to tend.

When I had spoken all it then came to me to speak, he looked at me very keenly and said, "Are you, Miss Hammond, ready to give me your word, the word of a Christian gentlewoman, that you believe there is no worse than you have told me?"

I could answer unhesitatingly that I was ready, that I believed Elfie feared and disliked his cousin, though, while she was

simple enough to fancy him her slave, she was often influenced by him to thwart and wound her husband; that I also believed that with such love as her immature or imperfect nature was, as yet, capable of, she loved that husband. When he had heard my answer he was for some moments silent, keeping that keen watch of me. Then, he said, with reverent fervour—

"Thank Heaven that I can believe you to believe this. I will try and make your faith mine. No easy task."

"As I suspected," I said, "it was jealousy, jealousy of you, of course one knows by whom instilled, that took Elsie to Rookwood last night." I was impelled to add, "The form the feeling took was, doubtless, as absurd as it was inexcusable, but the feeling itself—is this jealousy quite groundless?"

My question evidently much surprised him; he seemed to reflect for a moment, then he said, very quietly and simply—

"As you know there is a woman whom I love as if she were my sister, for the rest there is no woman I love as one loves one's wife, if I do not love my wife."

For a few minutes nothing was said, then I, feeling things were quite at the best that could be expected of them, became very practical.

"I don't know if you have had any lunch, Allan, but if not, if you can live without feeding it is more than I can do. Used to an early dinner, I am, by this time, quite faint with want of sustenance."

"Lunch! dinner!" He echoed my words rather perplexedly, then looked at his watch, evidently having no idea whether the time of day was that to make lunch or dinner the more appropriate. After which, with much self-accusation, many apologies for his inconsiderate want of hospitality, he gave me his arm into the dining-room, where the table had long been laid for lunch.

I saw that he himself only pretended to eat.

I questioned him about his appetite, and his sleep, and got only evasive or eminently unsatisfactory answers.

Presently, after a somewhat humorous study of me,—and how glad I was to see that spark of humour lighting up the sombre melancholy of his face; he said,

"Is it within the bounds of possibility that Elsie's maid—I mean the young one—or that old Markham could make you a cap, presently, while you are resting?"

"I must go home to rest."

"Indeed no, we cannot spare you. And I am sure you are terribly tired."

"Possibly, if I am to stay, the lesser difficulty would be to send to Hannah for my cap."

"That shall be done, while you are resting."

I felt by this time a most pressing need of rest, and a great longing that it should be that rest at home which the old are apt to feel as the only true rest.

But I yielded to Allan's entreaties and promised to stay a few days; then when I had lunched, and I found myself unable to take much, Allan consigned me to the care of my good old friend Markham. She, having promised to call me, with a cup of strong tea, when the dressing-bell rang, left me warmly covered over on a downy couch in a darkened room, and I was soon in a profound sleep.

#### CHAPTER X.

I HAD slept profoundly for the best part of three hours, when I woke to find the room now softly radiant with wax-light and firelight, and Markham standing over me with the promised "cup of tea," which meant at Braithwait a marvellously beautiful fairy equipage of chased silver and costly old china.

Ah me! for the refinements and luxuries of life (of the latter I have never run risk of satiety, and the former one may, perhaps, love to the end, if they are loved in due proportion) my palate has lost little of its relish. To-day, however, in spite of that profound sleep, and in spite of the pleasantness of everything around me to which I woke, I still felt exhausted, and old—very, very old. I love talking, but such talking as I had done that day, so different from my usual easy chit-chat chatter, had been a strain and a tax upon me, had taken a good deal out of me; I felt old, very, very old. For once Markham got the chance of prosing on almost uninterruptedly. I listened in a sort of half-doze. Markham told me I had no need to hurry, and I did not feel able to hurry, and I did feel reluctant to leave the soft warm quiet of that room, not knowing, once out of it, what fresh agitations might be in store for me, of what stormy scenes I might have to be a witness.

Good Hannah, wishing that I should do no discredit to Braithwait, had sent me not only my best cap, but my good black satin gown, my cobweb fine white Shetland shawl, my velvet wristlets with the

cameo clasps, my cameo brooch which was en suite with them, in short, all my large and small fineries—good Hannah!

When I came to think of it, rich gown, soft shawl, and the costly old lace of my cap borders, my cuffs, and my collar, all were presents from Allan Braithwait on the occasion of Elfie's being about to be "safely married" to him little more than one year ago. How kind and generous that boy had always been to me, as, indeed, had been his dear old father before him!

My good gown was rich and long and ample. I was pleased that Hannah had sent it. When Allan should take me in to dinner on his arm, I should feel, in that good gown, less than usual like Mother Hubbard. There is something in the sense of rich drapery sweeping about her feet and following after her footsteps, that helps a little woman, young or old, to self-confidence and self-possession.

I was glad of Markham's arm along the corridor and down the stairs—dear, dear, how old I felt, how old and shaky!—I should be better, Markham assured me, when I'd had my dinner and some wine. Markham is a wise woman, and is generally correct.

I wouldn't let her announce me, but I slipped into the drawing-room quietly, and I was glad indeed that I had done so, for I saw a pretty picture, the sight of which warmed and cheered my old heart.

The rich curtains were drawn, shutting out the chill November night, but the room was not yet lighted up, except by the blazing of a cheery fire, and by two small moonshiny lamps, one at each end of the finely-carved oak mantelpiece.

In the heart of what light there was, sat Allan, and Elfie was at his feet, her arms upon his knees, her face raised to look up into his face—an attitude in which I had never before seen Elfie.

Good heavens! how lovely she looked! How radiant a creature! Clothed in some sort of soft-shining fairy raiment, and with a little sparkle of gold or jewel here and there. "Dark and true and tender is the north," I muttered to myself as my eyes rested on Allan.

But even then, when his face was comparatively bright, I was struck by the look of it—a look not of slight and temporary ailment, but the look—or so I fancied—of a man whose heartstrings had been strained to cracking, and who is on the

very verge of some grave malady of mind or body.

They both came to meet me when they knew I was in the room, and they led me between them to the fire, with many kind questions as to my rest, and my present feelings, as they settled me in a low chair. Then Elfie said,

"I find, Aunt Hammond, that you told Allan nothing of my wish to go abroad."

"I had so much to tell him, child. For once I've quite tired myself with talking."

"Well, I have given up the wish. I mean to stay at Braithwait all the winter. Allan has been telling me how much he is needed here, how much there is for him to see to. He says there are ways in which I can help him. We have been planning such a splendid Christmas for the poor! I think that will be amusing. If I can please my husband I shall be glad. I am going to try not to be selfish."

Elfie spoke with a curious sort of difficulty and abstractedness. I saw her shiver and I thought she looked very pale; but meeting one of Allan's old looks—Allan the lover's looks—she seemed to warm and to brighten.

They told me they had sent my old man and chaise and pony home, with a note to Hannah (the groom who had brought my cap and gown had taken no message, except that I should not be home that evening), telling her I should remain at Braithwait some days, and that if she put ready such things as she knew I should want, the package should be fetched next morning.

"You children evidently consider my affairs—to me so mighty—of very small importance. You forget that I am queen of however minute a kingdom, and you detain me as arbitrarily as if I were nothing to nobody! I don't know what Hannah will say."

At this moment dinner was announced.

At dinner we were quite cheery. I hope, after the soup and wine had renovated me, I was not too lively; but once, when I caught the solemn butler's regard of me, it occurred to me that he, at least, thought me a very fast old person.

For once Elfie's face showed signs that she had suffered, but instead of its loveliness being dimmed, or diminished, by this fact, it had gained something of tenderness and of pathos which enhanced it. But for that sign of suffering on Elfie's face, and for that look which I didn't like, and couldn't cease to see on her husband's,



I might have believed, in the midst of all this warmth and brightness, that we had in the morning been, as Elsie had expressed it, dreaming night-mare dreams. But these were large exceptions.

After dinner Elsie played and sang, with her light brilliant touch and clear bird-like voice. The old woman dozed by the fire, and the young husband sat, head on hand, contemplating the exquisite creature he called his wife.

After we had taken coffee, and I had a little roused myself, Allan brought to me, asking me to read, a short note which had been written during my afternoon rest.

I found I had left my spectacles at home, without them I was quite unable to decipher Allan's somewhat minute scholarly handwriting, especially by lamp-light; he had therefore to read to me the following note.

"TO MY COUSIN, EDGAR RAMSAY.—Mrs. Braithwait joining me in the wish that you should no longer be received at Braithwait, you will for the future find its doors closed against you. Judging that it may not be either pleasant or convenient for you to remain in England when you are excluded from Braithwait, I will arrange that you shall receive, in quarterly payments, a sufficient income, while you may see fit to live abroad."

"In a week from now I will meet you, at eleven o'clock, at my London solicitor's, to settle all matters of detail."

"Mrs. Braithwait, who goes heartily with me in this matter, and who, it will be well you should know, has been at length entirely candid in her explanations, at her own desire appends her signature to mine."

Such was the note Allan read to me. Having heard it, I asked for pen and ink, and scribbled with my shaky old hand, these few words, which, when written, I could not read, but they assured me to be quite legible.

"I, Mary Adela Hammond, having just heard these lines read, wish to say that I have never from so few lines had so much pleasure."

"What a pity this could not have been done long ago," I said.

"But it could not be done till now," answered Allan, his glance significantly touching Elsie's bent head as he spoke. "And, even now," he added in a lower voice, meant only for me, "it is easy to

apprehend that the good done by it, even if great, will still be far from unmixed."

On reflection, I understood something of what Allan meant; understood how deep a humiliation he suffered in needing to take such a step; understood how deep a damage might be done by a few gay, apparently careless, really studied words, of Edgar Ramsay's. Words that should lightly hint, for instance, that his cousin's lovely wife not being as wise as she was fair, and having shown some girlish preference of his gaiety over her husband's gravity, it had been intimated to him, by her husband, that he was no longer welcome as a guest at Braithwait, no longer welcome to the master, because too welcome to the mistress; that he, therefore, being a good-natured, obliging, easy-going fellow, the last man in the world to wish to trouble his gloomy cousin's domestic peace, had consequently resolved to travel.

I seemed able to hear the light laugh, and to see the gay malice of the glance accompanying such words. Poor, poor Allan! Or, even, he might say no more, less by one word, than I had, just "Poor Allan," and so say it, and in such connection, as to make the saying very fatal.

Poor, poor Allan! It sometimes seemed to me, either in moments of unusual depression, or of unusual clear-sightedness, that the sickness of which he was attaint must prove mortal.

#### CHAPTER XI.

THE morning but one after that cheery evening, the post-bag, delivered at breakfast-time, contained, among other matters, two letters from Edgar Ramsay—one for the master, one for the mistress of Braithwait.

Allan placed his, unopened, in his pocket-book: Elsie's he handed to her, without looking at her, and, also, without immediately withdrawing his hand when she had taken it. Recognising the writing, Elsie turned pale, crumpled the letter up, and slipped it into her pocket. What could have induced her to do this, why in the world she could not have given it at once to her husband, whose lingering hand awaited it, I could not imagine.

There followed a dreary half-hour. Allan looking the personification of all that was ominously gloomy. When he had left the room, I exclaimed,

"Elsie, you little fool, how could you be so senseless?"

"What have I done wrong? What is Allan looking so black about?"

"Do you really mean to say you don't know—that no instinct warns you?"

"Indeed, I don't know," she answered, piteously, and looking ready to cry, her nerves had not, any more than my own, recovered the shock of two days before. "Is it all going to begin over again already?" she asked.

"Can't you see, Elsie, that, after what has passed, there was only one thing for you to have done with Edgar Ramsay's letter, to have given it at once, unopened, to your husband?"

"Should I have done that?" she asked, with something new, of docility, and of simplicity in her tone, and in the expression of her face. "But, how can I know what may be in it? Besides, Allan himself gave me the letter. If he had wanted it, why did not he keep it?"

"Can't you see the difference?" I asked, quite savagely. "What he wanted was not the miserable letter, but the proof of his wife's confidence and—and love—implied in giving it to him."

"I think I understand now—but—perhaps—as I did not give it at once, I had better look at it—in case—"

"In case?" I demanded, my suspicions of Elsie awaking. She did not answer me, she had opened the letter and was reading it. In a few moments, with fevered cheeks, and hot eyes, she looked up, and said,

"Read it. It is such a letter as I expected! Dare I show it to Allan?"

"Don't dare not to show it! whatever it is," I answered, hastily. But when, after taking it to the window, I had, with some difficulty, made it all out, my judgment as to what she had better do with it for the moment halted.

That letter was a work of art. (Edgar Ramsay, had he had industry, could probably have got himself a handsome living by his pen.) I wish I could reproduce it, but I know my memory could not serve me to do it justice. It was a studied, subtle, guarded piece of malice and of insult. It assumed for Elsie, whom it called a poor little frightened captured birdie, the most profound commiseration. It pitied her as the victim of her own weakness, and of the plots and machinations of the strong-willed people about her. The letter was full of veiled, only thinly veiled, allusions to passages of love and of confidence, which it was pretended

had passed between Elsie and the writer, and of which, from the very nature of them, I needed no assurance of Elsie's to convince me she was guiltless. With an affectation of tenderness and of devotion Elsie was reproached for the cowardice of having for the second time been scared into falsehood to her own heart, coerced into choosing, for the second time, Braithwait and bondage, rather than that glorious life of love and of liberty which was to have been hers in the future. The letter ended with asseverations of the writer's unwavering constancy, and of his prophetic certainty that the time would come when, able no longer to bear her husband's settled, savage, murderous glooms, his lovely darling would fly to his sheltering arms!

"Can I, dare I, ought I to show that to Allan?" Elsie asked me. "What will he not think of me? What may he not believe if he reads that villain's letter? Oh, Edgar Ramsay, if only I had you here. If only I could be revenged upon you!"

At that moment Allan came in: ostensibly to fetch the morning papers which he had left beside his plate, possibly, also, to give Elsie another chance of openness. He looked at her covertly, noting the rose-hued flame of her cheeks, and the blazing of her eyes.

I found courage to speak.

"Allan, you are naturally annoyed at your wife's folly in not giving you that villain's letter."

"Folly!" he echoed.

"Yes, folly, it was folly and fear that hindered her. She has shown it to me. It is an infamously false and vile production. I ask your leave to burn it, here, now, before your eyes."

He hesitated a moment, then he said,

"It is necessary, or at all events I feel it necessary, that I should read it."

"Not here, not in my sight," cried Elsie, and put her hands before her face.

"Well," was all he answered, but as he left the room, he gave Elsie a look that, so it seemed to me, must have broken my heart had I been his wife. Yet there was no anger in it, but something sadder and deeper, a profound despair.

"Aunt Hammond," said Elsie, when he had been a few moments gone, "Make some excuse for going to him, to try to find out how he bears it."

"Child, go yourself."

"I dare not, indeed I dare not."

I did as she asked me, not without a sigh for my feeble unfitness for so much to and fro of feeling.

He looked up as the door opened.

"You thought it was your wife," I said.

"I hoped it might be."

"She sent me, she dared not come."

"And," I thought to myself, "it is not such a face as I now surprised you with, you poor, poor young fellow, that could give her courage."

"This great fear of me is something new."

"Yes," I answered, "and to me it seems the best of signs. Elfie used to fear nothing, and to care for nobody; her irresponsible ignorance is clearing off, the selfish indifference which made her invulnerable is giving way. Fearing you, may be her first step towards loving you, with something worthy to be called love. It was some feeling for you, of the pain that miserable letter must cause you, that made her send me here, where she dared not come herself."

He very keenly regarded me, but he made no answer.

After a moment or two's silence he said—

"There is a use to which I should like to put this letter. But my hands are tied from gratifying my soul's desire. The honour of the good old name, the one thing left me to care about, forbids that my cousin should come to his death by my hands, this letter bullet-driven into his heart. Therefore, I burn it. You may see me burn it."

He held it to the flames, and he kept his hold of it after the flames, running up it, burnt his hand. He seemed as if he would have let them devour it from between his very fingers, had I not snatched it from his hold and thrown it into the fire.

"Destroyed!" he muttered, when it had disappeared. "Would to Heaven I could know the same of the writer—would to Heaven he also were destroyed!"

"Allan Braithwait," I said, trying to speak solemnly and impressively, trying to keep my voice from trembling, "can you trust yourself to meet that man? Would it not be wiser, and also braver, for surely sometimes to shun temptation is true courage, to depute someone, good old Mr. Brock for instance, to act for you?"

"I would not spare myself one pang the meeting must cost me. I feel greedy of pain. The blistering of this hand, even,

was a gratification. I can trust myself to avoid the doing of the deed that would peril the honour of the old name."

"There is one thing, Allan, I would implore you to do when you are in town."

"If it is any service to be done for you, Miss Hammond, you have no need to implore."

"It is service to be done for me. I want you to see some first-rate physician, to get the very best advice. I am sure you are gravely out of health."

"If so, in no way any physician can heal. I want rest, rest of mind and of body. Nothing else can do me any good."

"Well, and rest you are now, we trust, going to have. But, believe me, your chance of it is greater, far greater, if you can get into better physical health."

I extracted, at last, his reluctant promise to do what I asked. When I went back to Elfie I tried to infect her with my serious fears about her husband's health; but in the time I had been away something had happened which had changed the whole current of Elfie's thoughts. A dress had arrived from Paris, a dress to be worn at a fancy ball which Elfie was to give at Braithwait in the first week of December, and she had turned eagerly from the dark trouble of the last day or two to the contemplation of this event. I am not sure that in truth the frivolous change was as complete as she chose that it should seem; just now and then some passing expression of her face would make me think it was not. The whole project of this fancy ball had been Edgar Ramsay's, even the dress she was to wear, as an Elfin Princess, had been planned by him; the fact that he would not be present, would have gone into banishment before that day, took nothing from Elfie's zest of anticipation.

That night, after we thought Elfie had finally disappeared (Allan was just reading to me the concluding paragraph of a newspaper article I had wanted to hear), the room door opened noiselessly and there glided in a lovely vision. Elfie dressed as she was to be dressed for her ball. I should have said robed, for it was a robe rather than a dress that draped her, in rich soft-flowing creamy-white; never was anything at the same time so costly and so simple-seeming as that costume of Elfie's. The rich, noiseless, mysteriously gleaming stuff had been woven on purpose for her, she told me, and, here and there, sprinkled as if by accident, among her loose-hanging

fair tresses, on her breast, her arms, her zone, her skirt, were diamond dew-drops, while a large diamond star shone on her forehead.

She paused in the brightest spot of the room and gazed wistfully and yet with a sort of tremulous triumph at her husband.

A very ermine of unspotted purity. And yet with—or was it only the effect of her diamonds?—a curious elvish, baleful glamour about her—a something phosphorescent, light and brilliance without warmth—in fact she was, in the very completeness of her beauty, uncanny.

"It is perfect," we both decided, for indeed she looked a very miracle of loveliness. "It is perfect, but——"

"I am so glad you like it!" she cried, and flew at Allan, throwing for half an instant her jewelled arms round his neck. Elsie's caresses were always of so rapid a sort, one had hardly time to be conscious of them before they were over. Then she made us a bewitching curtsy, wound her train over her arm and glided away without waiting to hear what might have followed Allan's "but."

"Like it!" her husband muttered, when the door had closed behind her. After a pause, and with evident effort to brighten, he added,

"Well, if an Elfin Princess condescend to marry an ordinary mortal, the least that mortal can do is to try and modify his mortal needs and nature, try to repress his craving for sympathy with sentiments and emotions of which an Elfin Princess cannot be expected to know anything. Solid old Braithwait has never before had a fairy mistress. If the fairy prove a beneficent fairy let it be thankful."

I just stayed on at Braithwait till Allan returned from meeting his cousin in London; then I craved permission to go home before the day of the great ball. I was not feeling well. I needed quiet and rest. Life at Braithwait seemed, somehow, to keep me on the perpetual strain, always expecting something to happen, even though Elsie was "safely married!"

"You want quiet and rest!" said Allan meditatively when I spoke to him of my wish and my need to go back to my own home. "So, I should say, do I; and yet, as I told you, that wise doctor you made me consult prescribes stir and change

and movement, threatens me with melancholia, monomania, I don't exactly know what, if I let myself vegetate or dwell too much on one set of ideas."

"He showed the insight I expected of him," was my self-gratulatory answer.

"Do you think so?" asked Allan in a rougher tone than he often used for me. "Stir and change and movement for a fellow whose one longing is for rest!"

"As the one longing of a person lost in snow and lapsing into the fatal snow-sleep is to be let alone! Your doctor showed himself the wise man I have always thought him."

"He's probably no more a fool and charlatan than the rest of them!" returned Allan with one of those bursts of unreasonable irritation which I had recently observed in him. "But no, I beg his pardon, and own it is quite unfair to say that. He has to act on half knowledge, to try and deal from without with a malady only to be reached from within. Small blame to him if his prescriptions are alike inadequate and impossible. At all events my wife is pleased with them."

"Inadequate, if you please, but how impossible? Stir and change and movement you can certainly secure."

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"No doubt, Miss Hammond, that is well and wisely said. And so we must lose you!"

He had been very reserved with me as to what had passed between himself and his cousin; if I could credit him little had passed but that which was absolutely needful for the arrangement of the business on which they met.

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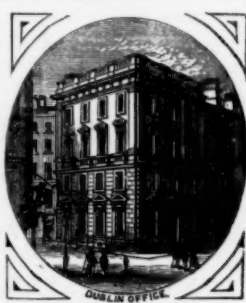




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OF THE

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OF THE MONTH

OF THE MONTH

OF THE MONTH

OF THE MONTH

OF THE MONTH

OF THE MONTH

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